

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL POLICE, FIRE & RESCUE AND SAFER COMMUNITIES BOARD

MINUTES of Meeting of the POLICE, FIRE & RESCUE AND SAFER COMMUNITIES BOARD held in Via Microsoft Teams on Friday, 6th November, 2020 at 9.30 am

Present:- Councillors G. Turnbull (Chairman), D. Moffat, N. Richards, E. Robson, H. Scott, Mr M Dickson - NHS Borders and Ms M Simpson - Voluntary Sector

Apologies:- Councillor E Small.

In Attendance:- Superintendent A MacInnes, Police Scotland; Local Senior Officer S Gourlay, Group Commander M Jaffray, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service; Safer Communities and Community Justice Manager; Senior Policy Advisor, Communities and Partnership Manager and Democratic Services Officer, J Turnbull, SBC.

1. **MINUTE**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting held on 28 August 2020.

DECISION

APPROVED the Minute.

2. **PROGRESS REPORTS/UPDATES ON SERVICE MATTERS - POLICE SCOTLAND**

- 2.1 There had been circulated copies of Police Scotland's Scrutiny Report for Quarters 1 & 2 - 2020/2021. Superintendent MacInnes began by explaining that the report was in a new format to ensure it directly correlated to the Local Police Plan. The report also included a section on Local Police Plan activities. He advised that Chief Inspector Stuart Reid had been promoted to a new role and that Inspector Jacqi Mcguigan would lead the local police team until a new local Area Commander had been appointed. Superintendent MacInnes referred to the continuing impact of Covid-19 and that Police Scotland continued to follow the four E's approach: Engage – understanding the regulations and changes; Educate - by explaining what we can and can't do; Encourage - people to comply, Enforcement – as a last resort for people who won't comply. He acknowledged the successful partnership working with the Council's Emergency Planning Team and community resilience work in response to Covid-19. Police Scotland recognised, that over the winter, mental health might come to the fore as people continued to live with restrictions. With regard to police attendance at community council meetings he advised that Police Scotland's IT policy meant they were unable to participate in meetings via Zoom but could use MS Teams. However, local police officers were meeting with elected Members to develop other levels of engagement. Local Area Command reports had also been adapted to be more area and Ward focused.
- 2.2 Superintendent MacInnes then highlighted the main points from the report. Regarding missing persons, he explained that Police Scotland were implementing the Herbert protocol for people with dementia, a national protocol which would be rolled out to the Scottish Borders. They were also developing an Autism protocol, focused on young people. Both initiatives would be reflected in the Local Police Plan and improve the response to missing people. In response to a question Superintendent MacInnes explained that the Autism protocol was still being developed and national engagement was taking place with the NHS and autism charities, following which the protocol would be discussed with local NHS Boards. Superintendent MacInnes then referred to the rise in

reports of domestic abuse incidents, explaining that because of Covid-19 more people were being confined to home which could raise tensions in households. Police Scotland and partners were aware and were responding appropriately. With regard to hate crime, there had been a small rise with 22% of such crimes against Police officers. Detection rate for hate crime was up by 7% since the end of September. Superintendent MacInnes then referred to the rise in reported sexual crime, 52% of which related to historically crimes. Indecent and sexual assault reports were down, but there had been an increase in reports of Group 2 crimes including communicating indecent images. Drug supply, production and cultivation had also increased by 12.5%. There had been some good recoveries of controlled drugs in the Cheviot and Tweeddale areas. Four warrants had been issued in the Eyemouth area and Class A drugs had been recovered. The report also showed there had been an increase in crimes of violence and a corresponding increase in detection rates. Analysis had shown no specific trends for concern. Referring to anti-social behaviour there had been an increase in incidents, 24% of which were attributed to Covid-19 breaches of regulations. Regarding disorder in town centres, weekend patrols continued. Going forward the police response would be dependent on which tier an area was in. The CAT and Community Policing team were also working on initiatives to tackle the rise in youth disorder, such as letters to parents. Superintendent MacInnes then advised that there had been an increase of 11 crimes of threats of extortion compared to the same period last year, a number of which related to personal relationships. In response to a question, he advised that trends had not shown that this crime was associated with vulnerability but was across the community regardless of age, education or gender. Superintendent MacInnes then advised of break-ins and detection rates both of which had risen. With regard to road safety there had been a reduction in all three categories of accidents. Unfortunately, there had been a fatal collision on the A68 involving a motorcyclist and van. Regarding the 18% increase in bail offences, the police were responding by maximising the safety of victims with proactive bail checks to ensure there were no breaches. With regard to Operation Glow Worm he would feedback the request for additional lights and high viz clothing to Inspector McGuigan. Mr Jones added that they the Council were assessing funding to be able to expand the project to other young people. Regarding cold calling signage at Lennel village, this would be referred to the appropriate council officer for action.

- 2.3 Superintendent MacInnes then reported on CAT activity during the period and response to specific tasking, including the issuing of parking tickets, drug searches and speed checks resulting in 255 warnings, 55 speeding offers with 18 reports to the Procurator Fiscal for excessive speeding.
- 2.4 Superintendent MacInnes then referred to new section of the report which detailed Local Policing Plan priorities. He highlighted that Covid-19 had an impact on the Borders Blue Zone project which would be implemented when appropriate restrictions were lifted. In the meantime the funding would be utilised for rural crime prevention activity.
- 2.5 Board noted the because of Covid-19, there had been delays in setting up forensic examination units for each health authority. It was requested that at the next meeting, the Board receive data over a period of time, of referrals for victims of sexual crime to support agencies. The data to include statistics on victims that did not wish to be referred. The Chairman thanked Superintendent MacInnes for his attendance and informative report.

DECISION

- (a) **NOTED the report.**
- (b) **AGREED statistics on sexual crime referrals to be circulated for the next meeting.**

MEMBER

Councillor Scott and Mrs Simpson left the meeting during consideration of the above report.

3. **PROGRESS REPORTS/UPDATE ON SERVICE MATTERS - SCOTTISH FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**

- 3.1 With reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of 7 February 2020, Local Senior Officer Gourlay began by advising that Bonfire night in the Scottish Borders had been quiet with no concerns. In terms of SFRS response during the pandemic, one member of staff had developed the virus which meant that an entire Watch had to self-isolate. The Watch staffing was covered and it had not affected SFRS response. LSO Gourlay advised that development of the SFRS Local Plan would be deferred and a draft would be presented to the Board early next year to dovetail with Scottish Borders Council's Community Plan. The new domestic smoke detection standard was likely to be delayed by a year, subject to Scottish Government decision. LSO Gourlay asked that if any Board members had any questions relating to service delivery that he be contacted direct as this would enable a quicker response. LSO Gourlay concluded his report by advising that the rural full time Watch Commander for the Hawick cluster would commence in January, interviews were taking place remotely the following week.
- 3.2 Group Commander (CG) Jaffray then presented the SFRS Local Plan Performance report for the period 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020, copies of which had been circulated with the agenda. GC Jaffray summarised that there had been a slight increase to 38 in dwelling fires from the previous year; 61% of these originated in the kitchen, with 29% involving cooking appliances. There had also been an increase to nine of fire related casualties. There had been no fire fatalities during the period. GC Gourlay explained that Road Traffic Collisions had decreased due to Covid-19 restrictions which had meant less traffic on roads. It was anticipated this figure would unfortunately increase as restrictions were lifted. Deliberate Fire Setting had also decreased in the period to 79; many of the fires were attributable to anti-social behaviour. There had also been a reduction in special service categories from 42 the previous year. Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) had also decreased, although still an area of concern. In response to a question regarding UFAS caused by equipment failure, GC Jaffray advised that when fire crews attended a UFAS they categorised the failure in order that they could tailor advice to duty holders to alleviate any problems. There was also a UFAS champion who analysed incidents for trends. However, no specific cause or premises had been identified. CG Jaffray acknowledged that 13% of UFAS related to educational premises and the SFRS were available to work with the Council to drive down incidents.
- 3.3 GC Jaffray then went on to discuss the SFRS Prevention and Protection activities for Quarter 2 (1 July to 30 September 2020). He explained that fire safety audits had now recommenced with officers now visiting premises. Care homes were still an area they were unable to visit but advice was given over the telephone. Fire home safety visits had also been introduced and focused on high risk individuals referred from partnership referrals. Eleven visits had been carried out during the period. GC Gourlay explained the new safety standards to be introduced to reduce the risks of fires in domestic properties, a date for introduction was awaited from Scottish Government. It was noted that registered social landlords were working on delivering the standards to their properties and hoping to retain the 2021 target deadline. CG Gourlay concluded by advising that youth engagement had also been impacted by Covid-19 restrictions. However, advice was provided through social media. As a result of pausing youth engagement, TD1 was to receive a grant from the SFRS to support the work they did. The Chairman thanked LSO Gourlay and GC Jaffray for their informative reports. This was GC Jaffray's last meeting and he thanked him for his attendance at meetings and wished him well for his retirement.

DECISION
NOTED the report.

ADJOURNED

The meeting was adjourned between 10.30 am and 10.50 am

4. **SAFER COMMUNITIES PERFORMANCE UPDATE AND KEY ACTIVITIES**

There had been circulated copies of the Safer Communities performance report for 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020. The Safer Communities and Community Justice Manager, Mr Jones, was in attendance. Mr Jones began by advising that staff restructuring within the service had taken place. With domestic abuse staff now permanently funded by the Council and changes to anti-social behaviour officers to achieve more resilience. Some staff were also still relocated to community assistance hubs for the Covid-19 response. As a result, mediation figures were down as the officer had also been heavily involved with the travelling community. Mr Jones then discussed the report. With regard to anti-social behaviour, the five year trend had been going down. However, during Covid-19 incidents had risen with new cases referred to the core group. Mr Jones explained that one of the issues was that officers were unable to physically meet people and often a more direct approach was helpful. Early intervention works would be monitored to analysis the effectiveness of different approaches. Youth warning letters from the Police Community Action Team had been issued to parents to highlight situations where young people had come to the attention of police officers when evidence of ASB was present. Face to face mediation had also been restricted but would hopefully normalise as restrictions reduced. Mr Jones then advised that although domestic abuse incidents had risen, referrals have gone down as there appeared a slight reticence in being referred to the domestic abuse service. However, victims were able to self-refer at any time and information was available on the Council's website. Repeat referrals were being analysed to consider additional support required. Mr Jones advised that although figures showed a reduction in contact targets, new clients to the domestic abuse service were being contacted within 24 and 48 hours, 100% of the time. Referring to the increase in MARAC numbers, Mr Jones explained that that this was important as these cases related to the most serious and a multi-agency approach was required to minimise risk. CEDAR referrals was also being sustained over the period using MS Teams and by telephone. To conclude, Mr Jones advised that accident levels had decreased. Drive Wise and motor cyclists training would be reintroduced when Covid-19 restrictions allowed and the Community Safety Officer returned to his substantive post. In response to questions, Mr Jones advised that incidents of domestic abuse have risen. Advocates undertook a risk assessment of all contacts to maximise an individual's safety and minimise the likelihood of perpetrator actions having a negative consequence. Superintendent MacInnes added that there had been an increase in calls, some related to Covid-19 restrictions. He would find out from police analysis if there had been an increase in reporting time. It was indicated in discussion that RSLs had maintained their phone service and increased digital contact with tenants, they had also undertaken proactive welfare calls for tenants to raise any issues. The Chairman thanked Mr Jones for his report and the work his team were doing in response to Covid-19.

DECISION

NOTED the report.

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled to be held on Friday, 5 February 2021 at 9.30 am.

The meeting concluded at 11.55 am